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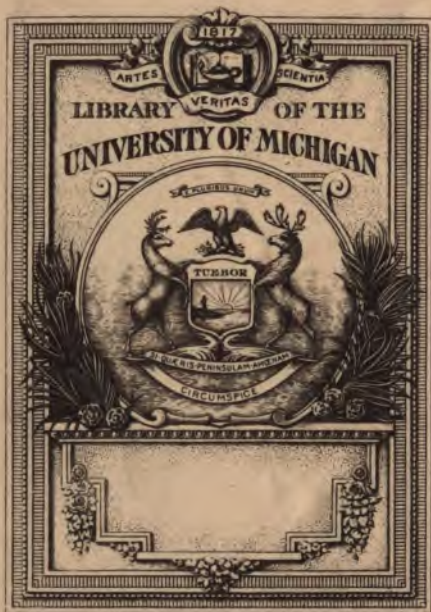
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THE GIFT OF
Samuel P. Duffield

UNIV. OF MICHIGAN

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TWELFTH EDITION—REVISED

UNIV. OF MICHIGAN

DEC 16 1909

CHRIST BEFORE PILATE

The Painting by Munkacsy

A DESCRIPTION OF THE PICTURE
A SKETCH OF THE ARTIST'S LIFE
AND NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS

PRICE, TEN CENTS

101

“**N**O painter of a more vigorous, intense, and truly artistic personality has been born into the world in recent years than the Hungarian, Munkacsy. I may, indeed, call him, without hesitation, the very strongest of all living painters. It is hard to say which is the more impressive in his work, his masterly technique, of a sort quite peculiar to himself, or the splendidly artistic temperament it reveals. . . . And Munkacsy is an original master—one who cannot be said to owe his qualities to the example of any predecessor.”

MRS. SCHUYLER VAN RENSSELAER.



Samuel P. Duffels
CHRIST
BEFORE PILATE

The Painting by Munkacsy

A DESCRIPTION OF THE PICTURE
A SKETCH OF THE ARTIST'S LIFE
AND NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS

PREPARED BY CHARLES M. KURTZ
EDITOR OF "NATIONAL ACADEMY NOTES"

PUBLISHED FOR THE EXHIBITION.

1887

PREFATORY.



IN the preparation of this hand-book it has been the aim to present such matter as might serve to explain the picture "Christ Before Pilate" as the painter would wish it to be understood, and to give such facts concerning the artist and the painting of the picture, and such views of prominent persons regarding it, as might be interesting to those who, being impressed by the work, may desire to know more of it and its creator than is otherwise conveniently accessible.

In the compilation of the biographical sketch of the artist, the writer must acknowledge indebtedness to "*Les Artists Modernes*," by Eugène Montrosier; "*Some Modern Artists*," published by Cassell & Co.; to a former hand-book of the painting "*Christ Before Pilate*," and especially to an excellent paper on the early portion of the artist's career, by John R. Tait, in *Lippincott's Magazine* for February, 1879.

Personal acquaintance and conversation with the artist have also given some facts.

C. M. K.

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INTRODUCTION.



THE paintings of the Old Masters treated almost exclusively of religious themes. In Italy, where the art of painting was almost newly-born in the Fourteenth Century, it was the aid and accompaniment of the religious feeling of the time, and partook much of the same character. The best of the old art is that which was produced for the adornment and religious purposes of the cathedrals and churches.

In these early days religion was half shrouded with mysticism; history was wedded to mythology, and the real was much confounded with the symbolical. With the springing up of the Monastic Orders came a throng of legends to be illustrated and perpetuated for the edification of the faithful; and, inspired by the spirit of the age, the painters and poets represented the real and the ideal as associated in intimate relationship. Personages of this world were mingled freely with saints and angels.

This art was usually exceedingly devotional in its character, and the pictures seem, for the most part, to have been painted by men who were animated by religious fervor. These artists were invigorated, no doubt, by the general reaction succeeding the dark ages, and we see in their paintings evidences of enthusiasm and great sincerity.

* * *

The art of our own times is inclined more toward the expression of what is actual, probable or possible. Religious subjects are rarely chosen by the painters of to-day, but when they are selected they are treated from the more strictly realistic standpoint. On this account, modern pictures of such subjects, painted by artists who have conscientiously studied the contemporaneous

history, architecture, costume and other details of the intended representation, serve much more strongly to impress the mind with the historical reality of the events portrayed, though, in many cases, they lack the devotional spirit and the superb color so often characteristic of the early masterpieces.

* * *

Munkacsy's early life was a tragic one, and the sad scenes with which his childhood was surrounded tended to develop in him a keenly sensitive and sympathetic nature, and to give his mind a decidedly serious cast. His earlier Hungarian studies and his first important picture—"The Last Day of a Man Condemned to Death"—show the direction of his feeling in these days. It was at about this period in his career that Munkacsy, who, in religion, is a Roman Catholic, first considered the idea of expressing, on canvas, his conception of Christ. The representations of the Master which he saw in the churches—reproducing the type of the old Italian painters—did not satisfy the ideal which had grown in his mind. To him they seemed effeminate—personifications of too much humility and too little inspiration and strength of purpose. The faces seemed rather to portray the character of a weak, submissive man than that of a man of strong will but great forbearance—such a man as could be severe to the obdurate wrong-doer as well as tender, sympathetic and forgiving to the repentant sinner. Munkacsy's idea, even at this time, was to represent Christ as a man inspired by a most noble purpose—the salvation of the world—his earnestness so great, and his love for lost humanity so strong, that he would willingly suffer death, if necessary, to the accomplishment of the divine purpose.

In time, the idea came to him to paint "Christ Before Pilate." In no other subject, it occurred to him, could he so well bring into prominence those great qualities of the Master, that impressed him so strongly, as in the scene which immediately preceded the awful tragedy of Golgotha, when the Saviour—forsaken, reviled, falsely accused, denied even the formality of a trial—stood before the Roman Governor to be sentenced to an ignominious death.

Wisely enough, the artist did not attempt this great subject until the maturity of his power had been attained; yet, during the years he was dreaming of the picture he should some day paint,

he made sketches and studies from time to time, to serve him as future memoranda for it.* This preparation for the work was so thorough, that in little more than a year from the time when the picture was begun, it was finished.

The painting was completed in 1881. The artist had intended to send it to the *Salon* that year, but a fire in his studio prevented the picture from being ready on the day appointed for the reception of exhibits. The artist solicited a short term of grace and was denied, and then a private exhibition was determined on, "with the result," wrote Émile Bergeret, "of the picture 'Christ Before Pilate' transporting the Salon of 1881 to the Rue Rochefoucauld, *chez* M. Sedelmeyer."

"All Paris" flocked to see the picture, and the income from its exhibition rivalled, it is said, that received at the turnstiles of the *Palais de l'Industrie*. Later, the painting was successfully exhibited in various European cities:—among others, in London,

* Of the studies and sketches for the picture, "Christ Before Pilate," the following remain in existence:—

- (1) Three studies for the head of Christ:—one now belonging to Mr. August Belmont, New York; another to Dom Pedro, Emperor of Brazil, and the third to Mr. Goldschmidt, an amateur in Paris.
- (2) Three Jewish heads, (visible, in the painting, between the Roman soldier and the Christ,) now owned by Mr. Charles Sedelmeyer, art dealer, Paris.
- (3) Three Judges in discussion (visible beyond the figure of Caiaphas), at present owned in Scotland.
- (4) Caiaphas (head only), present owner unknown.
- (5) The woman with the child in her arms, owned by Prince Demidoff, St. Petersburg, Russia.
- (6) The figure of a man with his hands upraised, supposed to be shouting, "Crucify Him!"—also owned by Prince Demidoff.
- (7) Figure of the Pharisee seated, owned by Mr. Charles S. Smith, New York.
- (8) Pharisee (head and bust), owned in England.
- (9) A cartoon of the entire composition, in charcoal, on paper, the full size of the painting. Owned by the artist.
- (10) A study for the entire composition, about one-fourth the size of the painting;—also in possession of the artist.
- (11) A smaller, very sketchy study, for the entire composition;—in possession of the artist.
- (12) A small study for the entire composition—about one meter in length—now owned by Mr. Waring, an English engineer, a friend of the artist. This is the picture recently advertised as on exhibition by Thomas McLean, 7 Haymarket, London. It has been loaned twice for exhibition in England.
- (13) A sketch for the entire composition, smaller than the above, now owned by Mr. Lebmeyer, Austria.

Vienna, Berlin, Stockholm, Buda-Pesth, Amsterdam, Manchester, and Brussels,—more than two millions of persons attending its exhibition in Europe. Last year the painting was brought to America by Mr. Charles Sedelmeyer, and its exhibition was opened at the Twenty-third Street Tabernacle, New York, November 17. In less than five months from that time the picture was seen by nearly one hundred and fifty thousand persons. In February the painting was purchased from Mr. Sedelmeyer by Mr. John Wanamaker, of Philadelphia.*

* It seems peculiarly fitting that Munkacsy's greatest work should find a home in the United States. The art-patrons of this country were the first to recognize and appreciate his genius, and here are owned nearly all his most important works. The first painting which brought Munkacsy's remarkable talent to the notice of the world was "The Last Day of a Man Condemned to Death," which was painted to order for Mr. Wiltach, of Philadelphia, while the artist was still unknown. This picture and the "Blind Milton Dictating Paradise Lost to his Daughters" (bought at the *Exposition Universelle*, Paris, 1878, by Mr. Robert Lenox Kennedy, and generously bestowed upon the Lenox Library, of New York, founded by the uncle of the donor,) were landmarks in the rapid development and astonishing career of the artist. Indeed it may almost be said that although Hungary is his native country and France his artistic one, America is gradually becoming the home of his most important works.

At the present time, works by Munkacsy are in the collections of the late Mr. W. H. Vanderbilt, Mr. William Astor, Mr. Henry G. Marquand, Mr. August Belmont, Mr. Morris K. Jesup, the Hon. Henry Hilton, Mr. Ferd. Blumenthal, Mr. George I. Seney, Mr. Charles S. Smith, Mr. C. J. Osborn, Mr. O. D. Munn, Mrs. Robert L. Stuart, Mr. Jay Gould, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (by bequest of the late Miss Katherine L. Wolfe); Mr. W. T. Walters, of Baltimore; Mrs. J. Wiltach, Mr. H. C. Gibson and Mr. John Wanamaker, of Philadelphia; Governor Russell A. Alger, of Detroit, Mich.; Mr. Rice, of Boston, and others.



THE PAINTING.



HE painting. "Christ Before Pilate," shows the interior of the Prætorium—a large, square apartment, lighted through an opening in the roof—with Christ standing in the foreground, facing Pilate, before whom Caiaphas is making a violent speech of accusation. Groups of judges and curious spectators on the right, and a mob, composed of the worst elements of the population, filling the background in the left. Only three personages can be definitely identified by name,—Christ, Pilate and Caiaphas. None of the disciples, of course, appear, and the spectators represent only the various types of the people who were present on this momentous occasion.

The first glance at the picture usually gives the spectator the impression that the scene is real, and that the figures before him are living persons; this feeling is one which it sometimes seems to require an effort to shake off.

The point to which the eye is attracted first is the figure of Christ. It may embrace the whole painting, or wander from figure to figure, but it will always return, unconsciously, to the Christ, because the interest of every individual in the picture is centred on Him, and because, in his sublimity, purity and dignity, He is, in every sense, the central figure in the picture. The intelligent skill of the artist has made the light and color concentrate here, and has even caused the lines of the composition to lead one hither.

Christ, clad in a white robe, His hands bound before Him, stands facing the Roman Governor, calm and firm, yet not defiant,—awaiting the sentence and its execution. He is wasted from fasting, and haggard from loss of sleep and the strain to which His physical nature has been subjected.

We feel that He is, indeed, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," yet there is no expression of repining or of regret;

and, though He knows He is to be sentenced to death, there is nothing of hopelessness in His face. He is courageous, yet submissive to the will of the Father; not shrinking before the fierce looks and fiercer cries of the angry mob eager for His life, but, with calm forbearance and quiet dignity, enduring the insults and bitter taunts as one rendered superior to them by the consciousness of His divine mission. No tremor passes over this wonderful face; no thought of self is betrayed by a single line, or by any movement. He stands erect, though bound, looking into the face of Pilate in a searching way, that has caused many to remark that it is Christ who is the real judge and Pilate who is being weighed in the balance.

These verses, from the Gospel according to St. Matthew, seem to indicate the moment of the scene :

And Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked Him, saying : " Art thou the King of the Jews ? " And Jesus said unto him, " Thou sayest."

And when He was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.

Then said Pilate unto Him, " Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee ? "

And He answered him never a word, insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.

MATTHEW XXVII., 11-14.

Pilate, in the white, purple-bordered toga of a Roman Senator, occupies an elevated judgment seat, reached by four steps and set in a niche in the wall, upon the sides of which are carved various emblems of Roman authority,—the wreath, the fasces and the letters " S. P. Q. R."—*Senatus Populus Que Romanus*.

The face of Pilate is that of the typical Roman of the time. It is expressive and at some times might seem indicative of strong decision of character; yet here, where the case brought before him is of such a phenomenal and puzzling nature, and where the placid countenance of Christ and the violently expressive face of Caiaphas are contrasted with it, it seems miserably full of indecision. In his character, Pilate appears to be the servile representative of a power which he assumes to exert over the masses, while in reality he is controlled by them. His arms are partly folded; his left hand is open, and he seems, by the nervously mechanical motion of his fingers, to be calculating the result, to himself, of one action or the other, in the disposition of the case. Pilate, at heart, is not wholly a bad man. He has a fair sense of justice, but he is a



PILATE



CAIAPHAS

politician—selfish in his desire to retain the favor of Cæsar at any cost, and he only violates his honest conviction and inclination to release Jesus, when he feels that by acting according to the dictates of his conscience he may jeopardize his own temporal prospects. These verses from St. John give the key to his final action in the matter :

Then saith Pilate unto Him : " Speakest thou not unto me ? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee ? "

Jesus answered : " Thou couldest have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above : therefore he that hath delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him : but the Jews cried out, saying : " If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend :—whosoever maketh himself a King speaketh against Cæsar."—JOHN XIX., 10, 12.

The High Priest, Caiaphas, stands erect at the right of Pilate. With a vehement torrent of words he is recounting the charges against Christ, and with outstretched hand is pointing to the howling multitude which is in accord with him in demanding the death of Jesus. This old man has a Pharisee's self-assurance and a fanatic's obstinate prejudice. He has no sympathy with, no toleration for, anyone who does not coincide with him in opinion.

Every figure on the canvas has its proper place and historic bearing. The civilization of the time, when the Christian religion was founded, is admirably reflected in the painting, in its diverse figures, its types, features, garments and architectural details. The different ways in which the people are interested in Christ's fate are represented with as many shades of expression as there are figures. No two persons are alike, and none express their emotions in the same manner. There is no copying from a pattern, no monotony, but a realistic individuality combined with a harmony and unity throughout.

On a seat—which extends along a projection of the lower stair of the judgment-seat—is a typical Pharisee, rich and insolent, his whole air expressive of self-complacency, knowing scarcely any other emotion than that which arises from the accumulation and care of his riches. He looks vindictively upon the Saviour, whom he suspects of being an innovator with an ambition to revolutionize society. Misunderstanding the nature of the revolution, he fears for his wealth, and therefore triumphs in the tragical turn which the destiny of Christ appears to be taking.

A figure which occupies a prominent place in the composition is that of a scribe, perched high on a seat, against the wall of the Prætorium—his arms crossed behind his back, his uplifted face expressing a commingling of curiosity and contempt for the victim.

Between the governor and Caiaphas sit two judges, one of whom looks, with the severity of one learned in the law, towards the disturber of the faith, while the other casts a doubting glance at the hesitating governor, as if to read in his features the coming decision.

Behind Caiaphas and the Pharisee appear three priests who are discussing "the case" theoretically, heedless of what is going on, but without any compassion for the accused.

To the left of the judgment-seat, consequently, in the right-hand corner of the picture, sit two other priests. They listen to the words of Caiaphas while they look towards the Saviour. One of them—the one nearer the spectator—appears to be thoughtfully considering the words of Christ, half inclined to believe that a terrible wrong is being committed, but without the courage to protest against it; the other leaning forward, seems to agree with the fanatical expressions of Caiaphas.

One-third of the Prætorium at the left, and the vestibule, which opens on a sunny, oriental landscape, are filled with the surging and raging multitude. They threaten to crowd into the judgment hall, but a Roman soldier checks them with his extended spear. His is a sinewy, vigorous, superb figure. On his right are four Hebrews, all looking on Christ. They do not participate in the furious howling, though their features betray no sympathy with the accused. Two of them, types of the sophistical usurers, appear to be discussing the untimely zeal of this founder of a new religion.

To the right of Christ, an impudent, knavish scoffer bends on one side and leans over the railing to sneer in the face of the Saviour.

On the left of the soldier, a rude fellow lifts both arms in the air, and cries out with wide open mouth: "Crucify him!" thus giving the password to the turbulent mob in the background. He is a nameless historical character, and in the composition stands as a witness for the mob; upon whose testimony Caiaphas demands the condemnation.



"CRUCIFY HIM!"

Further to the left, the painting terminates with two curious spectators. The younger one leans forward, from behind the spear, being interested in the event, whilst the other shows no emotion whatever,—he has simply followed the crowd.

In the midst of the narrow-minded, fanatical multitude, a young mother of Raphaelic beauty, holding a child in her arms, is looking compassionately, almost believingly, on Christ. This is the only female figure in the composition, and hers is the only face expressing pity for the accused. Thus it acts as a foil, intensifying by comparison the hatred and malignity in the faces by which it is surrounded. This sympathetic look is a conception of the spirit of the Christian religion. With the delicate feeling of a poet, Munkacsy has symbolized the Christian idea by a young mother, who accepts lovingly the rising religion and will perpetuate it through the medium of her child. The period in which Christianity arose has never, perhaps, been conceived from a more human standpoint or with greater force. In spite of these realistic views, Munkacsy has been able to conceive these events in a more ideal manner, probably, than has any of his predecessors.



STUDY.

BY DR. A. GUÉNEAU DE MUSSY.



DE MUNKACSY'S PAINTING, "CHRIST BEFORE PILATE," IS AN EVENT IN CONTEMPORANEOUS ART, AND MARKS AN ALMOST UNEXPECTED EVOLUTION IN THE PAINTER'S TALENT.

This artist has not, hitherto, attempted such important subjects and such immense paintings.

This new work seems to reveal to us an unknown Munkacsy, who, from charming but more modest regions,—from the Elegy and Popular Drama,—has suddenly soared to the sublime heights of the Epopœa, and there, in a subject that has been treated a thousand times, has known how to remain original, without attempting to be so; for such attempts generally lead but to extravagant results. THE SECRET OF HIS ORIGINALITY IS, THAT HE HAS REMAINED HIMSELF. He has placed himself before his subject, without taking into consideration what others had made of it before him; and he has shown it as it appeared in his poetical, or creative mind.

Ποίητης is one who invents and creates; poetry and originality are two terms related with each other.

In changing grounds, M. de Munkacsy has also changed his form; he has created a new coloring. He is one of those painters who are fond of clair-obscur and strongly marked shades. But his coloring, which formerly was criticised as being somber, bistre and spotted with soot, has been lighted up with all the riches of the Venetian palette. He has passed from Goya to Tintoretto. The impression which his Pilate produces reminds us of the one we feel at Venice, before the grand paintings of that fiery master.

However, we must say, that to those who have attentively followed the series of Munkacsy's productions, and the successive

stages which his talent has accomplished, this evolution must seem less unforeseen than would at first appear. We find in his first works the two master-qualities which we admire in this one: FEELING and (I will not say LOVE OR TRUTH, which exist in many painters in a platonic state, but) the POWER TO BE TRUE, which pre-supposes a very remarkable faculty of observation, and great skill in execution.

Who has not been moved on seeing "THE LAST DAY OF A CONDEMNED MAN," that intensely dramatic page which chills the heart?—and that admirable "PAWNBROKER'S SHOP," rendering, with impressive traits, the anguish of the wretched being, pawning his last treasures—poor remains, old souvenirs, companions of his toils and sufferings, on which he throws, on parting, a tender and affecting look?

Two years ago M. de Munkacsy gave us, as a sort of prelude to his grand historic paintings, "MILTON DICTATING 'PARADISE LOST' TO HIS DAUGHTERS." Before entering upon Christian poetry, it seems he wanted to call up one of its greatest poets, and to try to become intimate with him. His "MILTON" has been, to some extent, the preface to his "CHRIST BEFORE PILATE." You remember that old man with the powerful forehead, lost in the contemplation of an ideal world? He does not miss his eyesight; he would not make use of it, if he had it;—the regions where his thoughts are soaring are only accessible to the mind's eye. He listens to those interior voices, which speak to privileged artists,—the *afflatur numine*, which Raphael has inscribed, as a definition of art, on the vaulting of the Vatican. The face of the poet is beaming with enthusiasm. His daughters, not to disturb the calm of inspiration, have suspended their labor and stand around him, silent and motionless.

In the painting which M. de Munkacsy now exhibits, Christ is the central figure, the ruling idea of the composition. This figure of Christ instantly strikes the eye and continually brings it back to itself, and yet it has been the most criticised part of the work.

As to all the rest, I have only heard the expression of one feeling,—that of admiration. But the Christ has roused numerous criticisms, independent of all preconceived ideas.

You will meet with free-thinkers, accusing him of a lack of

ideality, and with fervent Christians, finding him sublime. As to sentiment, I entirely share the latter impression; as a type, I find him admirable; however, with a slight reserve, which I shall explain further on.

If he does not immediately obtain universal approbation, it is on account of his originality; his is a new conception of the person of Christ; it is unexpected, and surprise precedes admiration. REAL MASTERS NEED NOT RECKON WITH THE EXIGENT ROUTINE OF THEIR PUBLIC; THEY HAVE TO FASHION THEM, ON THE CONTRARY, TO THEIR WAYS, AND ELEVATE THEM TO THEIR LEVEL.

I have repeatedly heard this commonplace reproach: "It is not Christ Divine!"

What does this really mean? How ought painting to express the Divine? Has the head of Christ to be surrounded with a halo of golden beams, as is done in the tradition of the Byzantine school, and adopted by the painters of the middle ages, and the image venders of our days?

To be sure, the Christ of M. de Munkacsy is not one of those insipidly handsome, sleek and tall Christs, such as the Academic School delights in, attributing to Him the studied refinements and ornaments of human vanity. Nor is it one of those vapidly mild and enervated Christs, full of mystical sensuality, of the painters who speculate on petty devotion.

IT IS THE CHRIST OF THE GOSPEL. HE WHO BEARS ON HIS SHOULDERS THE SUFFERINGS AND THE MORAL DEBT OF HUMANITY, BUT BEARING IT WITH THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF HIS DIVINE MISSION; WITH SADNESS, BECAUSE HE LOVES US, BUT WITHOUT HESITATION AND WEAKNESS, BECAUSE HE KNOWS THAT HE IS SENT BY GOD.

He is meek, but strong; one feels that nothing can shake Him, and that all the efforts of human power would break against His inflexible resolution.

If there is a shade of emotion in the glance which He throws on Pilate, it may be attributed to His pity for the soul of the Roman magistrate, who does not yield without struggle and regret; solicited by the voice of conscience, and wishing to obey it, but allowing himself to be intimidated by the clamor of popular passion, and the cowardly suggestions of his own personal interest.



CHRIST
FROM THE PAINTING "CHRIST BEFORE PILATE"

Jesus hears behind him the stupidly ferocious howls of that ignorant rabble, that, without knowing Him, would deliver Him to death :—He who has come to save them, and to re-vindicate their most sacred rights. Undoubtedly He pities them, but His thoughts do not stop with them. He has already said to himself, what He will soon repeat aloud on the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" All His attention is concentrated on the Roman magistrate,—a good man enough, but a coward, like many of those sated functionaries who sacrifice their souls to their ambitions. This one knows what he is doing. Not among the blind crowd, but in the soul of this man, the struggle between good and evil takes place, and the foreseen issue of that struggle saddens Jesus.

M. de Munkacsy's is a slender Christ: His sunken eyes gleam from their sockets, hollowed by suffering. He has already undergone the anguish of Gethsemane, the insult and the bad treatment of the Pharisees. He is pale, as the scriptures have him: *LIVORE EJUS SANATI SUMUS!* But his dignified, yet simple attitude, and His lightning glance, prove that His soul is in no way affected by the sufferings of His body.

In the foreground, to the left of Pilate, two Jews are sitting, in the magnificent drapery of their robes. The one follows with emotion the incidents of the drama unfolded before him; he would like to know its issue. The other fixes his piercing glance upon the face of Christ. He tries to understand him; he seems to ask himself whether this man, whom the populace accuse, despise and condemn, has deserved this violence and outrage, and whether He has not come, as He says, to reveal the truth and the way. He seems lost in his reflections, listening but inattentively to that admirable public accuser, who, standing on the right of Pilate, has pronounced the charge with an ardent passion, that can be read on his face, and who is now finishing his peroration by pointing to the excited multitude, claiming the crucifixion of Christ.

How well this multitude is grouped! How well the different sentiments that agitate them are represented in the various, and at the same time well harmonized expressions of all these figures, which, in their diversity, are all converging towards Jesus, whose calmness appears majestic in the midst of the tumult!

Some are impelled by fanaticism, others by an instinct of cruelty—inherent to vulgar natures—seeking their victims, whom they insult, the more to gratify their cravings. Such is the young African Jew, who sneeringly bends his head forward, in order to contemplate the anguish of Jesus. The greater number obey a given order, or act merely from imitation; they are not in the least violent. Look at the Jerusalem rough, shouting louder than the rest, probably without knowing why!

There are also amateurs of public trials, who have come here to seek excitement. They discuss and judge the case among themselves, as if it were a literary question. One of these curious men has hoisted himself behind the prosecutor, so as to view to better advantage, the scene which, however, seems to offer to his satiated taste but meagre attraction. He knows the issue beforehand, and cares but little for it; still he wants to see the unraveling of the plot.

In a place of honor, near Christ, a stout Jewish banker is sitting; he has a florid complexion, is dressed in a rich garb, and is thoroughly conscious of his importance and of the respect which great fortunes command. He looks with a disdainful curiosity on this seditious man, who is audacious enough to pretend that all is not well in a world where his millions occupy such an honorable place. On the other side of Christ is a fierce soldier, who keeps back, with a superb movement, the multitude which presses around Jesus.

From among these numerous personages, the figure of a young woman stands out, leaning against a column and holding a child in her arms. She is exquisitely beautiful; her attitude has a Raphaelic grace; the calm and pure sweetness of her features contrast with the turbulence of the countenances that surround her; it is a Madonna, lost in a Sanhedrim. People assure me that, in the thought of the author, **THIS WOMAN REPRESENTS RISING CHRISTIANITY**. I willingly accept this interpretation:—the Christian idea symbolized by a young woman. Woman's mind is better disposed than that of man to appreciate the sublimity of the Christian dogma, the essence of which is Charity. It is woman who sows in the soul of the child, the seed of the divine idea. If, in the presence of the sufferings of Christ, the painter has rendered



A PHARISEE



YOUNG MOTHER AND CHILD

her so calm, it is undoubtedly because she believes in His promises; she has faith, and beyond the trials and humiliations of the present, she catches a glimpse of the glory and the triumph of the future.

In order that the spectator may rest himself from the emotions of this grand drama, the artist shows him, through a window to the left of the painting, a delicious landscape, framed by the luminous Oriental sky, which, one might say, a Venetian had painted!

What seems most admirable, and what strikes you at first sight in M. de Munkacsy's painting, is its composition. **THE ART OF COMPOSITION IS THE QUALITY WHICH MARKS GREAT PAINTERS; it is to drawing and coloring what color is to style.** This quality, always so rare, charms and moves here so much the more, as it is generally wanting nowadays. Under the pretext of copying nature, men only produce its corpse, and this fault is manifest even in portraits. In most cases, life and thought are absent. The ruling vice of modern art is the absence of conviction and idea, which makes it impossible to give a true representation of nature; for nature itself is the representation of ideas of a superior order, which are understood only by great masters.

M. de Munkacsy does not content himself with painting the body—**HE TRANSLATES THE SOUL, THE THOUGHT, THE SENTIMENT, WHICH ANIMATE THE BODY—HE MAKES LIVING PAINTINGS.**

Another great merit of his work is in its **SIMPLICITY and NATURALNESS.** Nothing is more wearisome and common-place than what is emphatic and theatrical. Emphasis is a sign of mediocrity, or at least weakness. Powerful voices do not need to shout, in order to be heard. M. de Munkacsy moves and touches so much the more, as he keeps the right key. In this he is widely separated from the pretended realistic school, which, making a system of its weakness, applies itself to the reproduction of the vulgar and ugly, and confounds deformity and degeneracy with the natural type.

M. de Munkacsy feels and knows how to express the beautiful. This is proved, by his young mother and some of the pure Semitic heads which he has placed in his painting.

If the majority of his figures belong to vulgar types and are marked with the worst instincts of the Hebrew race, which is at



A PORTION OF THE POPULACE
FROM THE PAINTING "CHRIST BEFORE PILATE"

times so admirably beautiful, we must remember that he paints here the populace of Jerusalem, the men of the law and the "red-tapists," who, in an æsthetical point of view, do not represent the choice part of the population. We must add, that the painter had to choose his models among the Jews of Northern and Central Europe, who by their surreptitious mixture with the Germanic race, have undergone a degeneracy and deformation which is not remarked among those who inhabit Spain and Italy; for these have found, in the Latin and Hispano-Arabian races, ethenical elements, which harmonize better with their own race. Christ himself has undergone the Teutonic influence in the lineaments of his forehead, but his figure remains noble and beautiful.



M. de Munster.

MICHAEL DE MUNKACSY,

THE PAINTER OF THE

CHRIST BEFORE PILATE.

AN early life of hardships and struggle seems an almost necessary condition to ultimate distinguished success in this world, and it is evident how the strength gained in thus overcoming early obstacles is that which, in after-life, sustains vigorous and continuous effort.

It is said that the lives of artists are proverbial for adventure and vicissitude, but there can be few which, in these particulars can equal the extraordinary career of Michael de Munkacsy.

Michael—in Hungarian, “Mihaly”—Munkacsy (pronounced Moun-ka-chee,—with the accent on the first syllable) was born in the year 1844, in the fortress of Munkacs, Hungary. His original family name was Lieb, but after Hungary had achieved independent recognition in the Government, every Hungarian citizen, in conformity to a privilege granted by law, had the right to choose a distinctively Hungarian name, and the Lieb family, loyal Hungarians but of German descent, adopted a modification of the name of their native town. Later, the Emperor of Austria, as King of Hungary, created Michael Munkacsy a Hungarian Baron, which gave his name the prefix “von,”—in French, “de.”

His mother died soon after his birth, and his father, a subordinate in the Austrian customs, joined the patriots under Kossuth, and in the reverses which followed upon Russian occupation, was thrown into prison, fell sick and died there. Young Michael, barely four years old, the youngest of five desolate orphans, was adopted by an aunt who lived at Czarba. During the stormy time of the revolution there was little government of any kind in Hungary, and the country was infested by marauding bands of robbers. One night one of these bands plundered the house of this aunt, and murdered all its occupants, except the then five-year-old boy. He awakened in the morning near the corpse of his aunt. An uncle—a lawyer named Reok—then took the lad to live

with him, but being poor himself and unable to give the boy an education, he apprenticed him to a carpenter in Békes-Csaba. For six long years he endured the slavery of this occupation,—sawing, nailing and planing, from early morning until late at night. He grew in stature, but his mind was a blank page; he was full of susceptibility, full of vague longings, but without education or knowledge. When, finally, he became a journeyman, a comparatively better time began for the young man, who became animated by an ardent desire for culture. Although his bread and his work were hard, he had some leisure hours which he was able to spend in study. He won the friendship of a few students at the College of Arad, where he had gone to work, and they initiated him into the mysteries of reading and writing. Then he began to study history and to read the poets,—especially Schiller, whom he loved above all others. He even composed some poetry himself.

In Hungary, as in most other parts of Europe, the village carpenter is jack-of-all-trades—builder, cabinet-maker, undertaker, upholsterer and house painter at the same time. Michael's earliest experience with colors was in painting the outside of a cottage, and his rude attempts at drawing were made on the smooth surface of a plank he had just planed. Even to-day he often paints on panels—a preference which was characteristic also of the Old Masters.

Among the Hungarian peasants, an indispensable part of every rustic bride's trousseau is a gaudy chest of drawers, ornamented with bright-colored flowers, wreaths and garlands. The manufacture of these objects was an important item in the village carpenter's business, and young Michael, being allowed to try his hand at decorating them, soon showed such remarkable skill and taste that at last this painting became his especial domain. From flower-painting he soon essayed figures, and he laughingly refers to the pride of an old Servian who set out for the new world with all the great and wonderful deeds of Marco Braukovich emblazoned on his trunk by the brush of Munkacsy.

Under severe mental and physical exertions which were beyond his strength, along with the privations he had to endure, Munkacsy broke down. By toiling daily from twelve to fifteen hours, he earned a weekly salary of two and a half florins (one

dollar), so that for months he was unable to procure anything warm to eat. He was attacked by a violent fever, which wasted his strength and left him unfit for manual labor. Again he found a refuge with his uncle Reok, who, in the meanwhile, had acquired a small fortune. When he had recovered his health, he went to Gyula, where he saw the portrait-painter, Szamosy, at work. Munkacsy was present at a few sittings and followed the form-creating brush of the artist with breathless attention. Then his future profession dawned upon him. He would become an artist. He obtained permission from his uncle to engage instruction from Szamosy, and he accompanied this artist to Arad. He soon was able to give drawing-lessons himself, by which means he earned his boarding. His first great material success consisted in his painting the entire family of a tailor, for which he received a winter coat in payment.

Szamosy instructed his pupil not only in drawing and painting, but also in literature, as far as he had mastered it himself, and Munkacsy made rapid progress, amply repairing the deficiencies of his earlier years. In 1863, he wandered to Pesth, traveling like a mechanic, and making strange acquaintances among gypsies, vagabonds and strolling apprentices on the route—acquaintances who afterward served his imagination as motives and models. For a while he earned a scanty subsistence in the capital, by painting portraits and small genre pictures, for which, as in many of those painted since, he sought his subjects in the original episodes of Hungarian popular life. One of these, an hussar relating his adventures, was bought by the Art Union of Pesth for eighty florins. Soon after, he sold another painting for one hundred and thirty florins. Having such a fortune in his pocket, the desire for travel was awakened in the breast of the young disciple of art, and he went to Vienna, where he thought to study with Rahl, an excellent painter, but one whose direction lay quite opposite that of Munkacsy. Rahl was ill, however, and died shortly afterward, and Munkacsy's attempts to educate himself in the Academy fell through for want of means. With a fatuity equalling that of the Düsseldorf professors—who prophesied that Andreas Achenbach, and, in later years, Ludwig Knaus, would never become artists—the authorities of the Vienna School failed to recognize his talent,

and when it became impossible for him to pay, with punctuality, the small Academy fee, he was shown the door without ceremony.

In 1866 Munkacsy returned to Buda-Pesth, and here his artistic career was very near being interrupted forever. He was afflicted with an obstinate disease of the eyes and passed six months in semi-blindness at the hospital. His sight was saved as if by a miracle, and he left the hospital and returned with renewed energy to his studies. With only twenty florins in his pocket, he went to Munich. Here he endeavored to become a pupil of Piloty, but that professor's class—which had become famous through pupils like Makart, Defregger, Leibl and David Neal—was full, and he did not succeed in obtaining admission. However, he visited the painting class of the Academy, and found a friendly adviser in the battle painter, Franz Adam. Of Munkacsy's strange appearance at this time, of his naïve confidence, his broken German, and his low, melancholy voice, many stories are told to-day in the Munich ateliers. His ability soon made itself recognized, and he painted numerous pictures for the lower class of dealers,—working even by lamplight in his contracted lodgings,—but striving more for excellence than for bread.

Up to this time the painter's life had been a struggle for existence, but the success which usually comes, sooner or later, to the patient and persevering, was preparing for him. The Art Union of Pesth bought two of his pictures, "Roasting Ears" and "Easter Festivities," and, under the auspices of Baron Etvös, at that time Hungarian Minister of Instruction, a competitive exhibition took place, in which Munkacsy's contribution obtained the first prize—eight hundred gulden—a fortune to him in those days. The picture represented "An Inundation," such a catastrophe as sometimes desolates some portions of Hungary. A second and third time fortune befriended him, and he was awarded prizes for compositions which showed rapid and remarkable advancement. "The Wedding Invitation" and "Dressing the Bride" were the subjects of these last works. "The Departure for War" and "The Return to Peace," other Hungarian subjects produced about the same time, gave even higher promise.

With the capital acquired in these competitions Munkacsy went to Düsseldorf. He had been attracted thither by the influence

of Knaus, but he soon found himself more a master than a pupil. With the hard, dry, conventional Düsseldorf school he had little sympathy. He startled the whole raft of mediocrities there, as the advent of a larger fish might startle the minnows in a pool. His peculiarities challenged their criticism, but it was idle to under-rate or oppose him:—they ended by admiring and imitating. Young artists who came to him frankly, he advised and instructed; older ones visited his studio in his absence and studied his technique by stealth.

Among Munkacsy's earliest friends in Düsseldorf was Mr. John R. Tait,* an American artist at present residing in Baltimore, but then an art student in Düsseldorf. Mr. Tait was attracted by the great genius and good-fellowship of the young Hungarian, and when an opportunity came for rendering him a service, eagerly embraced it. A wealthy American gentleman, who was devoting himself especially to the acquisition of a collection of works of art, visited Düsseldorf and became acquainted with Mr. Tait. The latter impressed upon him his own opinion of Munkacsy's genius, and the result was that the gentleman—Mr. Wilstach, of Philadelphia—gave Munkacsy a commission for a large picture. The price agreed upon was an enormous advance upon the prices the artist had hitherto received, though now it would be absurdly small for the painting; but it showed as much liberality as foresight at that time. Half the payment being advanced before the painting was begun, enabled the young painter to meet the expense of models and devote himself undisturbed to the elaboration of his work. The picture was begun without delay, the artist himself assisting the joiner to prepare the panel—fifty-two by seventy-two inches—which he used in preference to canvas. The subject, already chosen, had long been talked over and dreamed over. It was one of those happy suggestions that occur but rarely to the most fortunate imagination, and one that could be treated successfully only by a profoundly subjective genius. It represented "The Last Day of a Man Condemned to Death," of which a few lines of description may be given here.

The composition illustrates the Hungarian custom which

To Mr. Tait, as already explained, the writer is indebted for many facts recorded in this biographical sketch.

allows a condemned criminal an opportunity to take a last leave of his friends and acquaintances on the eve of his execution. This supreme moment, of higher psychological interest than the execution itself, is the one the young artist chose to depict. The scene is a cavernous cell, illumed by a pallid light from above, struggling through a grated opening in the middle of the composition,—a gloomy apartment in which the lighted candles on the table before the prisoner burn dimly. Between these candles stands a crucifix; the table is covered with a white cloth. Beside it sits the condemned man, his fist clenched and his pale face, brooding with a haggard despair, which is almost resignation, turned toward the spectator. His burning eyes looking out from under a mass of dishevelled black hair, stare fixed and hopeless into the unknown and terrible future. His foot is manacled by a chain fastened by a staple to the wall. Behind him, leaning partly on his musket, and partly against a pillar, stands a sentry—an Austrian soldier—looking on the scene with stolid official indifference. The condemned is obviously no hardened sinner, no every-day murderer, but a poor wretch whom, in an evil hour, his guardian angel had abandoned; most likely one of those outlawed brigands whose political troubles or destiny have forced into a course of life which brings them into conflict with the law. Near him stands his weeping wife, her head turned against the wall, incapable of giving him the consolation she has wished to bring,—heart-broken and desolate herself. Between them, awe-struck, yet unconscious, stands their child, its little hand in its mouth, gazing into vacancy. Anything more touching and tragic than this group of the three principal actors in the drama it would be almost impossible to conceive. The left of the picture is filled with persons on whose faces the most differing shades of emotion are expressed. There are the friends whose faces exhibit sorrow only,—the calm observer, the secret sympathizer, and, perhaps, accomplice, and the one who had predicted it would come to this. There are morbid curiosity and shrinking horror. A young mother with a child in her arms looks pityingly on; she has brought with her other children,—maybe to teach them the lesson of the frightful example. Nearer is a boy shrinking back from the prisoner, and still nearer a youth, on whose shoulder an old woman leans,—

blood-relations these, or intimate friends. A tall and brawny-armed smith, looking his sympathy, stands in the foreground, and beside him, timidly curious, a young and beautiful girl with a basket. An old man, in the background, gazes with reflective mournfulness, and behind, at an open door, a group of gossips croon their observations to one another. On the floor of the cell is a basin, half full of copper coins—contributions made for the benefit of the condemned man's family, or for his soul.

This picture, so full of dramatic force and poetry, was painted with a breadth of effect and with a bold and facile virtuosoship phenomenal in Düsseldorf. It was exhibited, when finished, in association with two other paintings by distinguished artists—Andreas Achenbach and Benjamin Vautier—for the benefit of a charity, and the exhibition room was crowded by eager admirers as long as it was kept open,—Munkacsy's picture, of the three, attracting the most attention.

The artist, nevertheless, felt a hesitancy about sending his picture to the Paris Salon (of 1870), though at the earnest solicitation of his friends—among whom was Knaus, who originally had disapproved of Munkacsy's plan of painting such a picture, but who had been won over by the power of the completed work—he finally consented to let it go. The first news of its reception by the Salon jury was brought to Düsseldorf by the famous art dealer Goupil, who posted from Paris the day the exhibition opened its doors for the private view. He offered, in vain, three times the price, for which the picture had been sold, ransacked the painter's studio, and paid what then seemed fabulous prices for several sketches and studies, besides contracting for a number of future works. Others followed, on like errands, and Munkacsy awoke, like Byron, to find himself famous. His painting was considered the picture of the year at the Salon, and took a medal. When the artist went to Paris, the foremost French painters welcomed him into their midst,—Meissonier and Fortuny showing him especial attention.

Munkacsy left Paris to revisit his fatherland and to share with his sisters, his good old uncle and other friends, the pleasure of his triumph—and a portion of its pecuniary results. Not only at home but in Pesth and other towns, he was warmly welcomed and fêted—

the loyal Hungarians showing the greatest pride in the success of their "Miska" (the familiar term for Michael). He returned to Düsseldorf, moreover, with a ribbon in his button-hole.

A new work already had been begun, another illustration of an episode in Hungarian life. It was called "War Time," and was a reminiscence of the wild revolutionary period that had so impressed itself upon his youthful mind. In an Hungarian country-house, around a long table, the women of the village, of high and of low degree, the children, the aged and the invalid, were occupied in picking lint for the wounded. While thus employed, a young wounded patriot—his face pale with recent suffering and his uniform bearing the stains of the bivouac and the battle-field—was recounting the story of the engagement with flashing eye and outstretched arm. His hearers seemed affected each after his or her own temperament. The face of the old veteran in the background lighted up with patriotic memories. The wan, deformed invalid, plucking with nervous fingers at his bit of rag, looked with impatient admiration and envy at the narrator who had been fortunate enough to be wounded for his country. A girl was weeping, and a mother was gazing anxiously expectant into a void—peopled, maybe, by images of husband and son in the midst of the fight. An old grandmother, picking mechanically, was lost in early recollections. A child was emptying the snowy contents of her apron into a basket; and a lady in black, an officer's wife or widow, sat with her hands folded in her lap, her sad, fair face turned toward the soldier, pensively listening. As a subject, this work was perhaps less dramatic than its predecessor, but it was not less full of subtly-conceived psychological studies. As a work of art merely, it exhibited, if not improvement, at least a power equally sustained and genuine.

Two years later the artist carried off a second medal, when "The Night Strollers" and "The Pawnbroker's Shop" were exhibited at the Salon.

At about this time Munkacsy was married to the young widow of a rich landed proprietor of the Duchy of Luxembourg (Baron de Marches), who had died a few years before. The couple established their home in Paris, and Munkacsy's splendid manner of living became the talk of the artistic world.

It would carry us beyond the limits of this brief biography to follow the artist, step by step, through his career up to the present time; it is only to be said that his good fortune did not turn his brain, or cause him to abate his artistic efforts. For some time he continued to paint the genre of national scenes—serious or gay. Later, he began painting interiors in quite a different style, reflecting more his new manner of living. His earlier pictures had been criticised for gloominess in color; his new departure proved that not one tone in the scale of colors was beyond his brush, and that the apparent abuse of black in his former paintings had sprung from the well-calculated intention to adapt the tonality to the character of the subject. But his new works were splendid in color and full of light. The "Interior of a Studio" (now in the possession of Mr. C. J. Osborne, of New York), which shows the artist and his wife in an animated discussion before an unfinished picture, may pass as the first decisive revelation of the new departure.

In the year 1879, the Cross of the Legion of Honor was added to the distinctions he had already received, and at the Exposition Universelle, in 1878, upon the appearance of his "Blind Milton Dictating 'Paradise Lost' to his Daughters," he obtained the highest prize the Exhibition could award,—the Grand Medal of Honor. He also received—scarcely one year after his nomination as Knight—the Officer's Cross of the Legion of Honor.

Since this time, Munkacsy has painted "The Two Families," "The Visit to Baby," "Grandfather's Birthday," "The Kittens," "After the Wedding," "Preparing for Papa's Birthday," "A Moment's Rest in the Woods," and "The Visit."

His greatest and most important pictures are "The Christ Before Pilate," "Christ on Calvary," and his latest work, "The Last Hours of Mozart." Of all his works, however, the artist and the world regard as the masterpiece the "CHRIST BEFORE PILATE."

* * *

In appearance, Munkacsy is tall and slender, with a face of great expressiveness and character. He has a clear, candid, kindly look, that inspires friendship, and a simple, earnest, unaffected manner that retains it when it is won. He is quick, nervous, excitable,—of intense feeling, keen perception and rapid action.

This could be seen from his sketches, if one had no opportunity for meeting the artist. Although only forty-three years of age, his abundant hair, of silver-gray, and the thick, gray moustache and beard, would give him the appearance of an older man, did not his undimmed, sparkling eyes gleam with the brightness of youthful enthusiasm.

* * *

Munkacsy's residence, in the Avenue de Villiers, Paris, is such an establishment—but on a different plan—as Rubens built himself in Antwerp. It is an artist's home above everything else, where the painter has unusually large studios, adapted for works of various characters. Beyond this, the house is like a museum, filled with art treasures and rarities, contributing to a splendor that is rich and tasteful. It is a hospitable abode, moreover, and whoever stands above mediocrity of merit, is welcome there.



EXPRESSIONS FROM THE CLERGY

ON THE PAINTING, "CHRIST BEFORE PILATE."

"It is wonderful as a work of art and is worth a thousand sermons as a moral lesson"—REV. T. DE WITT TALMAGE, D. D., *Brooklyn Tabernacle*.

"THE artist has seized life by its very highest elements, and speaks to us through his canvas in our deepest moods and our most pious aspirations."—REV. HENRY WARD BEECHER.

"It is as a work of art exceedingly fine and well managed in detail. The face of the Christ is a stroke of genius. * * * Pilate's is a pure Roman type and Caiaphas is Hebrew, but the Christ's face is that of the Son of Man, as He called Himself.—REV. CHARLES F. DEEMS, D. D., *Church of the Strangers*, New York.

"It is a fine production, beautiful in conception and a grand work of art."—REV. RODERICK TERRY, D. D., *Fifth Avenue Reformed Church*, New York.

"It is beyond the power of language to describe a work like this."—REV. J. S. CHADWICK, D. D., *Forty-third Street Methodist Church*, New York.

"A MOST beautiful and wonderful work of art."—REV. J. J. BROUNER, *North Baptist Church*, New York.

"I COULD not give, in a few words, a review of so great a work; my simple opinion of it is favorable; it could not be otherwise."—REV. HOWARD CROSBY, D. D., *Fourth Avenue Presbyterian Church*, New York.

"ONE of the finest works of modern art."—REV. WILLIAM R. HUNTINGTON, D. D., *Grace Episcopal Church*, New York.

"IT is a marvelous production. The combination of strength and meekness in the face of the Saviour is wonderful."—REV. DR. HULL, formerly of the *Tabernacle Baptist Church*, New York.

FROM THE NEW YORK TRIBUNE, NOVEMBER 22, 1886.

"THE REV. HENRY J. VAN DYKE, JR., D. D., preached yesterday in the *Brick Presbyterian Church*, 410 Fifth Avenue, New York. The text was in St. Luke's Gospel; 'And the whole company of them rose up and brought Him before Pilate.' The subject was suggested by Munkacsy's painting. In the introduction to his sermon he said:

"Three men were immediately concerned in the death of Jesus Christ, Judas Iscariot, a greedy traitor; Caiaphas, a cruel bigot; and Pontius Pilate, what was he? This question is one that has often engaged the interest of thoughtful people. For it is at once apparent that there are conflicting elements in the character of this man. The problem of his personality is complicated, and therefore stimulates our moral curiosity. He is not to be classed with Judas or Caiaphas, for the wickedness of their hearts declares itself at once. But the secret of Pilate's disgrace lies below the surface, and the puzzle is to know how a man with so much good in him could have acted so badly; how a judge who had so keen a sense of justice could have consented at last to such a flagrant iniquity.

"This inquiry is awakened with fresh interest just now by the presence in our city of a great picture, which deals in a masterly way with this very point. I call it a great picture, because, after all our criticisms have been made, * * * it still remains true that the painting creates a profound impression. It is potent, intense, throbbing with life. But it has been misnamed. It does not represent Christ before Pilate. It shows us Pilate before Christ. And this is the true aspect of that scene before the Prætorium. The prisoner is the judge. His position is secure, serene and untroubled. He stands upon the throne of His destiny. It is Pilate who is being weighed in the balance. It is his fate for this world and the next which trembles on the narrow edge of decision. How keenly the painter has expressed this. Look at that heavy, thick-set figure, with its brawny arms, bull-neck and bullet head, clad in the robe of white and purple, and seated on the Benia, which represents, for Judea, the imperial throne. All the mighty power, all the stern majesty, all the relentless justice of Rome are there. But read the pallid countenance, with its contracted brow, furtive eyes, nervously working lips; reach the tremulous hand with its fingers half outstretched and its upturned palm, and you will see the miserable indecision of the man who knows the right, but is afraid to do it, the wretched, time-serving politician, whose god is the popular will and whose heaven is his office; who would rather see a thousand innocent men suffer than have his little place and his ignoble dignity imperilled. What so contemptible as a low man in high station, a selfish man in control of justice, a man who regards public office as a personal prize instead of a public trust? Such a man was Governor Pilate. For the character which this picture reveals to us is true to history. Pilate was a moral coward."

"Dr. Van Dyke then proceeded to sum up what is known of Pilate from secular accounts, and then traced the sacred narrative down to the point where he is seen, as in the picture, seated on the Benia to pronounce the final sentence. Leaving then 'the miserable man, the unhappy Pilate, to his God,' the preacher discussed the subject of moral cowardice that threatens men in modern life.

"THE REV. WILLIAM LLOYD, D. D., preached yesterday in the *Central Congregational Church*, Madison Avenue and Forty-seventh Street, New York. The text was: 'And the whole multitude of them arose and brought Him to Pilate.' The clergyman said in part:

"There is no sphere in which the genius of man has triumphed, where more great men have sprung from the ranks of the lowly than in art. Correggio and Claude de Lorraine are among the grand examples. Of like birth was the artist Munkacsy. Rising through great difficulties, his grand genius soon won him fame. His two paintings, 'Christ Before Pilate' and 'Calvary' are destined to be lasting. I do not criticise the painting as a work of art; I endeavor to transmit to your minds what it imprinted on my consciousness. * * *

"There is much criticism of the face and figure of the Christ. It is too human.

But is this criticism just? To portray the Man of Sorrows is not easy. Munkacsy, in his study of the character, soon saw that a triumphant, glorious Christ would not be the sympathetic Christ. The head of Christ is all that a devout worshipper could desire. The picture portrays no mythical Christ, no haloed spirit. It shows the Son of Man in His divinest form, the brother of the oppressed and wronged in every age. The interest of the picture centres in the three figures, Christ, Caiaphas and Pilate. Christ is the supreme of the three. His calm, majestic sorrow stands in contrast to the hating, accusing Caiaphas, and to the hesitating, undecided, cowardly Pilate. The picture well shows Pilate's detestation of the Jews, but the downcast, weak eye shows his indecision of character. Carelessly he asks Jesus, 'What is truth?' That is the moment seized by the artist.

"But this is not a mere painting of a trial scene. It is a portrait of history. The Christ of the trial scene is the Christ of history triumphing over the Judaism of Caiaphas and the paganism of Pilate. That fettered hand is the one that has struck off the fetters of every slave; that hand that destroyed the power of the Roman Empire; that hand that overthrew the proudest ecclesiasticism that ever existed; it shall yet strike down the vulgar hands which in this nineteenth century would destroy freedom of speech and freedom of ecclesiasticism. This was the Christ I saw in the picture. That one with the calm, royal, human, yet divine repose."

From a recent sermon by the REV. CHARLES F. DEEMS, D. D., LL. D., *Church of the Strangers*, New York:

"While you stand in front of Munkacsy's great picture of 'Christ Before Pilate,' you gaze upon a powerful presentation of the representative of Roman Imperialism on the one side, and of a proud, decaying hierarchy on the other. How rooted, how deep, was the church represented by Caiaphas. How wide-spread, how strengthened with the growth of centuries was the government represented by that stolid man on the proconsular throne. How simple and how powerless appears the man who stands in simple, flowing white robe in front of the yelling rabble kept back by the stalwart Roman soldier's mighty spear. He has behind him no cohorts and no Sanhedrim, and yet you feel that somehow that man is mightier than all the other persons in the Prætorian hall. Is it because your knowledge of subsequent events goes into the picture? Is it because you cannot fail to remember that his poor, thin, pale, bound hands have burst their cords, and, lifted with some might which seems divine, have put out forever the fire on the altars and swept forever from the face of the earth the hierarchy represented by Caiaphas, and snapped the sceptre and overturned the throne and annihilated the imperialism represented by Pilate? That is what he has done; and this great picture gathers into itself at once the morning of prophecy and the noon-day of history."

FROM THE BROOKLYN EAGLE, MARCH 7, 1887.

THE REV. DR. HATFIELD in his sermon on Christ Before Pilate on Sunday morning last, in the *Washington Street Methodist Church*, gave his impressions of the celebrated painting by Munkacsy, now on exhibition in New York, and attracting unusual attention. "You who have seen that painting," said the speaker, "will recall the high priest

Caiaphas in his sacerdotal robes, preferring charges against the prisoner; the Pharisees with sanctimonious countenances, intently looking on; the mother and child in the back-ground, the only sympathetic faces in all the crowd; the great howling mob kept back by the Roman soldier's spear, and the ruffian with uplifted hands crying, "Crucify him, crucify him!" But the two figures that attract most attention are those of Christ and Pilate. On the face of one there is serenity, innocence, sorrow. He stands, majestic, earnest, tranquil, thoughtful—the Man of Sorrows. Upon the other face there is perplexity and indecision. Clad in his official robes Pilate sits upon the Benia, with open hand and downcast eyes, weighing in his troubled mind the case of his royal prisoner. As you look upon these two figures you cannot help feeling, as did another, that the scene does not so much represent Christ before Pilate, as Pilate before Christ.

As you gaze upon that painting, the most marvelous exhibition of human genius in art in modern times, and see the Master calm, conscious of innocence, and unbefriended, without a witness in His favor, without a disciple, without one word of sympathy, in the presence of a judge who represents the imperialism of Rome, you are impressed with His superiority to all the dignitaries, civil and ecclesiastical, by whom He is surrounded. You see those fettered hands and think how ready they were to minister to the poor, the blind and unfortunate of earth, and how now, unloosed, they have overturned that priestly hierarchy, of which Caiaphas was the representative. Christ stands there a prisoner, but in less than three centuries after, His religion conquered the very government that put Him to death, and a Christian Emperor sat on the throne of the Cæsars.

FROM ZION'S HERALD, BOSTON, MASS., MARCH 30TH, 1887.

(Correspondence by the Rev. WILLIAM BUTLER, D. D.)

A few days since, when passing through New York, I took the opportunity of seeing Munkacsy's great picture of "Christ Before Pilate." The effect, as one enters, is unique and startling; there seems a subdued and reverent atmosphere pervading the place. You feel as if suddenly carried back eighteen hundred years, and standing in the very presence of the dread reality which is there portrayed before you.

I was at once impressed with the solemnity of manner which was upon the audience. Every hat had been removed as soon as the eye rested on that tall, white-robed figure in the centre, whose hands were tied together with those cruel thongs, and whose wonderful face—calm and pitiful amid all the rage around Him—so well became "the suffering Son of Man" in that dreadful hour! He is looking directly at Pilate, who is occupying the seat of imperial power—looking into his very conscience—and "the governor" is shrinking from that calm gaze, and is under a tumult of conflicting emotions in which all sense of justice is being sacrificed, and the innocent Victim in whom he found "no fault at all," is about to be surrendered by this cowardly judge to the howling mob, led on by that bigoted and fanatical priesthood thirsting for His blood.

The reverence of the audience was easily accounted for. People as they entered paused awhile to realize the solemn scene before them. After resting and gazing upon it, they would then advance down the aisle to the bar in front of the great canvas, to examine more closely, and would again return to the background to sit and view the picture more quietly and at more leisure, so as to receive the entire impression which it was designed to make upon them. It was also affecting to see some of the mothers, as they led their children forward to explain to them what it all meant, and the little ones would look up and become awestruck. How real and how much the picture seemed to

them, especially as they gazed so earnestly at the Redeemer, of whom they had so often heard ! No doubt the evangelical narrative will henceforth mean far more to them, as to its reality and historical verity, than it ever could without this opportunity.

With no pretense of ability to criticise such a work as this, I can, nevertheless, state distinctly the effect which the study of it had upon me, and the train of thought which it suggested while I remained to view it. I was truly glad the painter had portrayed our Lord without that weak device of a *nimbus* round His head, or any of the theatrical vanities in which artists have depicted Him, as seen in European and Mexican galleries and churches. They are generally untrue and false to the facts. We may well rejoice that we have here a more worthy representation of the Saviour as He actually appeared on this occasion. The scene is in the "Judgment Hall," and the hour "early in the morning." Around the governor's exalted seat the priests are gathered, and the high priest Caiaphas is in the act of accusing Christ and demanding His death. The proud and furious bigot is all alive with excitement as he draws the governor's attention to the execrations of the mob, who are crying out, "Crucify Him !" as expressive of the national will which Pilate is bound to respect ; and insinuating that, to let this man go, will be treason to Cæsar as well as a violation of Jewish law, which demands the prisoner's death "for making himself the Son of God." The distracted and time-serving governor is evidently yielding to the clamor ; while his conscience, aided by his wife's message, just received—warning him not to condemn that righteous man—is protesting in tones which make him tremble. How the brow gathers blackness, and the eye sinks back in the head, while the mouth nervously contracts and the pallor gathers over the countenance of that unjust judge, who is about to sentence to execution a man he knows is innocent of any crime !

Meanwhile there stands Jesus waiting for the word. In His wonderful countenance is exhibited the artist's highest ability. Serenely sorrowful, not for Himself, but for those who are about to perpetrate this matchless wrong, and for all sinners for whose iniquities His righteous soul is about to be made an offering. A heavenly submission is on that face. But He accepts the situation, and is calm and unmoved as those horrors are here closing around Him, not to relax their dreadful grasp until He has "poured out His soul unto death—bearing the sins of many, and making intercession for the transgressors," even to the extent of pleading for forgiveness for these very murderers !

We linger to look again and again on that slender figure and that patient, suffering face. There is a certain measure of exhaustion expressed in the eye, which is somewhat sunken, and in the pallid cheek, while the hair is slightly disheveled, and the robe shows the effect of hard usage. His humanity is evidently weak from the rough treatment it has gone through during the past dreadful hours. The agony in the Garden which He had endured, followed by the arrest, and the long night of mocking and indignity to which their malice had subjected Him in the palace of the high priest, have all told painfully upon His person and aspect, while His soul is wrung with sorrow as He realizes that His disciples have all forsaken Him and fled. Judas has sold him, and Peter denied Him with oaths and curses. Here, then, He stands, forsaken and friendless, to endure all that now awaits Him—alone, and without a ray of human sympathy to mitigate His matchless sorrow. He is aware, too, that in a few moments the governor's vacillation will yield to the clamor, and give sentence that it shall be as they require, and that a vile murderer will be released instead of Himself. He knows, also, that, according to the usage, Pilate will order that poor, weary body to be "scourged" ere he surrenders Him for execution, till His lacerated back is made unable to carry His cross, and a stranger will have to be impressed to bear it after Him. Then will follow the most dreadful sufferings and death that the universe has ever witnessed ; and His soul will go forth from His

body, while the earthquake shakes the cross on which He hangs, and a supernatural darkness covers the whole land. All this He now sees there before Him, and knows that only three hours intervene ere these last horrors have reached their intensity, and He will be hanging in more than mortal agony upon the dreadful cross; and before the sun of that day sets, His lifeless and mangled form will be sealed up in a stranger's tomb.

A few of the "professional critics"—so called—seem incapable of comprehending or appreciating the purpose and lesson of this wonderful picture. They have failed to catch its evangelical spirit and purpose. To do so properly, requires sympathy with Jesus in His great atoning work. Such critics have attempted to define this painting as they would any mere works of art, which are totally idealistic and can never touch the sympathies of your soul. Evidently Munkacsy felt that he had a different mission in his great work. He designed to awaken a realizing sense of the historical verity of our suffering Redeemer, and so help men to more fully comprehend this "mystery of love" than they had been able to do before. And, truly, he has succeeded in his purpose, as is witnessed by the fact, stated in His biography, that two millions of people in Europe have visited this painting, and that already one hundred thousand persons since its arrival in New York have gone, and gone again, to see and study a picture which so realistically portrays this unique and sublime sorrow of the Son of Man.

As you gaze on the Figure which the artist has drawn so worthily, you feel an exultation in his success as he did his best to do justice to the higher nature which was veiled in that suffering mortality. For more than mortal consciousness and more than human sorrow are suggested here, and the divine history fills in and completes what the talented artist could not represent. The Redeemer is evidently enduring in the depths of His soul far more than that boisterous "contradiction of sinners against himself." He is awaiting those heavier woes in which these present sorrows are to be consummated. He is aware that his infernal enemy—"the god of this world"—is leading on against Him the "principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world and wicked spirits in high places," hoping to overwhelm Him and His purpose of mercy to our race. While, more awful still, He sees that bitter "cup" that His Father presents, approaching His lips, and which, while He is willing to drink it for us, most of all intensifies His agony as He reflects that His Father's conscious presence will be averted from Him, as part of His atonement endurance, until its last bitter dregs are drained. Yet, how deliberately and patiently He stands and awaits the advance of this superhuman sorrow! He awaits it as was becoming in Him of whom it was written, "Jesus knowing all things that should come upon Him."

But so fully has the artist entered into the spirit of Jesus on this occasion, that there is an entire absence of all perturbation or fear on the Redeemer's face, but, instead, there is the presence of a holy calm and even confident expectation in the outlook, sustaining Him under the load of woe He is bearing. This aspect is justified by His own words and the testimony of inspiration, that this "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" was surely to "see the travail of His soul and be satisfied," and that "for the joy which was set before Him, He endured the cross and despised the shame." More than this, He knew at this hour that these very sufferings were to make Him a perfect Saviour, and that the hour of His triumph was close behind that of His agony; and also that that triumph would include the very adversaries which then raged around Him. Hierarchy, and bigotry, and Roman Pantheism were howling for His blood and demanding that it be shed by means of the Roman's "servile punishment" of the cross. How fully He here foresees that His high providence, after He had become obedient unto death—even that death—would doom to perpetual overthrow the Sanhedrin, the throne, and the organized idolatry which condemned Him, while His divine kingdom would be established on their ruins! Even by that cross He would exultingly "spoil principalities and powers, making a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it," and "lead captivity captive." He then foresaw that "Christ and Him crucified" would become the adoring confidence and theme of hundreds of millions yet to be, and then rise to become the exultant song of all eternity, where, in His own presence, when "crowned with glory and honor" at His Father's right hand, "a multitude which no man can number would sing, 'Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Him be glory and dominion forever and forever.'"

Such were the reflections that filled my mind as I returned from the front to the rear

of the Tabernacle, to sit in silence and contemplate a little longer the wondrous scene, and anticipate the wondrous future which was to follow it. Again the present aspect is all-powerful, with its tender appeal—that gentle, calm and compassionate Lord Jesus, still submitting to those harsh thongs which bind His holy hands so cruelly, awaiting all, and ardently resolved to endure all, conscious that the redemption of the world was suspended upon His firmness in that “hour of the power of darkness.” With uncomplaining submission the “Lamb of God” is there awaiting the moment when He is to be “led forth to the slaughter.” But His divine sonship is manifesting itself, and He is enduring all in quiet consciousness that the blessed termination will transmute that dreadful cross into a divine magnet of compassion and love, that will yet “draw all men unto Him” for the forgiveness and salvation to be purchased by “the precious blood” which he is now waiting to shed for them upon it.

From a sermon preached by the REV. WILLIAM M. TAYLOR, D. D., of the *Broadway Tabernacle*, New York,—after having seen the painting in Liverpool, in 1882 :

During my recent visit to Liverpool I had the great enjoyment of seeing and somewhat carefully studying this wonderful picture which happened then to be on exhibition there. I have rarely been so much moved by a work of art and I should like to share with your readers some of the thoughts which were suggested to me, as I sat and silently contemplated the figures which, even as I looked at them, seemed to grow before me into life.

The canvas is large and the figures, all of which are on the line of sight, are of life size. The scene is in the pavement or open court before the governor's palace, which was called in the Hebrew tongue “Gabbatha” and in which, after all his efforts to wriggle out of the responsibility of dealing with the case, Pilate ultimately gave up Jesus to be crucified. At one end of the court on a raised bench and dressed in a white toga, Pilate sits. On each side of him are Jews, each of whom has a marked and special individuality. The two on his left are gazing with intense eagerness at Christ. They are evidently puzzled and know not well what to make of the mysterious prisoner. On his right, standing on one of the seats and with his back against the wall, is a Scribe, whose countenance is expressive of uttermost contempt; and just in front of this haughty fellow are some Pharisees, one of whom is on his feet and passionately urging that Jesus should be put to death, presumably on the ground that, if Pilate let him go, he would make it evident that he was not Cæsar's friend. Before them, again, is a usurer, sleek, fat, and self-satisfied, clearly taking to himself great comfort in the assurance that, however the matter in hand may be settled, his well-filled money-bags will be undisturbed. Beyond him stands the Christ, in a robe of seamless white, and with his wrists firmly bound, while behind, kept in place by a Roman soldier, standing with his back to the spectator and making a barricade with his spear, which he holds horizontally, is a motley group of onlookers, not unlike that we may see any day in one of our criminal courts. Of these one more furious than the rest, is wildly gesticulating and crying, as we may judge from his whole attitude “Crucify him! Crucify him!” and another, a little to the Saviour's left, but in the second row behind him, is leaning forward with mockery in his leering look and making almost as if he would spit upon the saintly one. There is but one really compassionate face in the crowd, and that is the face of a woman, who, with an infant in her arms most fitly represents those gentle “daughters of Jerusalem” who followed Jesus to Calvary with tears. Then, over the heads of the onlookers and out of the upper part of the doorway into the court we get a glimpse of the quiet light of the morning as it sleeps on the walls and turrets of the adjacent buildings. *All the figures are so distinctly seen that you feel you could recognize them again, if you met them anywhere, and a strange sense of reality comes upon you, as you look at them, so that you forget that they are only painted, and imagine that you are gazing on living and breathing men.*

But as you sit awhile and look on, you gradually lose all consciousness of the presence of the mere onlookers, and find your interest concentrated on these two white-robed ones, as if they were the only figures before you. *The pose of the Christ is admirable. It is repose blended with dignity, self-possession rising into majesty.* There is no agitation or confusion, no fear or misgiving; but, instead, the calm nobleness of Him who has just been saying, “Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.” Therefore, he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.”

The Pilate is well-nigh faultless. Here is a great, strong man—the representative of the mightiest empire the world has ever seen—with a head indicating intellectual force, and a face, especially in its lower part, suggestive of sensual indulgence. There is ordinarily no want of firmness in him, as one may see from the general set of his features;

but now there is in his countenance a marvelous mixture of perplexity, humiliation, and irresolution. He cannot lift his eyes to meet the gaze of Christ, and, while one of his hands is nervously clutching at his robe, he is looking sadly into the other, whose fingers seem almost visibly to twitch with excitement. He is clearly pondering for himself the question which a few moments before he had addressed to the multitude: "What shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?" He is annoyed that the case has been brought to him at all, and, as he feels himself drifting on, against his own better judgment, toward yielding to the clamor of the multitude, he falls mightily in his own conceit and begins to despise himself. He would at that moment give much to be rid of the responsibility of dealing with the Christ; but he cannot evade it, and so he sits there drifting on to what he knows is a wrong decision—the very incarnation of the feeling which his own national poet described in the words: "*Vide meliora proboque, deteriora sequor.*" I see and approve the better course; I follow the worse. Thus, as we look at these two we begin to discover that it was not Christ that was before Pilate, so much as Pilate that was before Christ. His was the testing experience. His was the trial. His, too, was the degradation, and on that coming day when the places shall be reversed, when Christ shall be on the judgment-seat and Pilate at the bar, there will still be in him that deep, self-condemnation which the painter has fixed here upon his countenance.

It is a wonderful picture and there is much in it to tempt us to an analysis of the reasons why Pilate felt just as he is here portrayed: but, apart from all that, there was to me a deep suggestiveness in the appearance of such a treatment of such a subject just at present. It is with artists, I believe, in the choice of their themes, just as it is with ministers in the selection of their topics for discourse. Both alike, consciously or unconsciously, and perhaps more often unconsciously than consciously, are affected by the spirit of their age. The atmosphere—literary, moral, philosophical, political, religious—which is round about them, and which they are daily breathing, does, insensibly to themselves, so influence them that their thoughts are turned by it into a channel different from that in which those of a former generation flowed. Hence, whether the painter intended it or not, there is in this picture, at this juncture, at once a mirror of the times and a lesson for them. The question of Pilate—"What shall I do with Jesus, which is called Christ?"—is pre-eminently the question of the present day. It is in the air. All the controversies of our times, social, philosophical, and theological, run up to and ultimately hinge upon this, "Who is Jesus Christ?" And one might very well find in the picture representatives of the different schools which have sought to answer it. By it men are tested still, just as Pilate was; and by it skeptics are perplexed still, just as Pilate was. The lives of Christ which have been published during the last thirty years would make of themselves a tolerably large library, and the cry even of the unbeliever is: "I could get on very well with my unbelief if I only knew what to make of Christ." That is the pivot on which all else turns. He must either be accepted as divine or accounted for on natural principles. There is no alternative, and the warning of the picture is that we should not seek to evade that alternative, as Pilate did, and so let ourselves be carried on the current of circumstances to a wrong conclusion. One critic has well put it thus: "A necessity is laid upon us. The adversaries of Christ press upon us to give our verdict against him. We are troubled and perplexed, for we have long heard about him and have had, each of us, his own convictions. We would still remain neutral. We try, and try in vain to escape from the spirit, the conversation, the literature, the question, of the times. Again and again we wash our hands; but neither our silence nor our actions are of any avail, and so we are found sitting, conscious of the presence and the claims of our Saviour, and, like Pilate, not daring to look at him, as we puzzle over the answer which we must give to the question that is being pressed upon us."

Alas! how many in our days are truly described in these words! And for them the lesson of this great picture is this: "You cannot evade the decision of this question; but be sure that you look at the Christ before you give him up." Nothing is more remarkable in Munkacsy's production than the evident persistence with which Pilate keeps his eyes away from Christ; and few things are so saddening as to meet with men who profess to have difficulties as to deciding about Christ while yet they do not read the Gospels with any degree of attention, but are continually busying themselves with perplexities about minute points in Scripture, of little or no importance. The word here for all such is: "Look at Christ! Give over trying to solve all the difficulties and so-called discrepancies which form the stock in trade of the infidel lecturer. All these are but dust, which he raises to keep you from seeing the real question, which is: Who is Christ? Settle that; and, if you do, all other difficulties will disappear, for, with your face toward the light, the shadows will fall behind you.

"It is not often that the painter becomes a preacher: but it will be long before I can forget the sermon that Munkacsy preached to me."



FROM THE AMERICAN PRESS.

In the European Press thousands of descriptive and critical articles concerning this picture have been published; and in America, since the opening of the exhibition, hundreds of columns of criticisms and notices of the painting have been published in the newspapers. From this matter we reproduce portions of a few articles which have appeared in prominent journals.

FROM THE NEW YORK WORLD, NOVEMBER 18TH, 1886.

* * * When the few great artists of our age and time shall have won, by lapse of centuries and art periods and by the power of their work, the title of "old masters," as we now understand the term, Michael de Munkacsy, the Hungarian painter, will hold a foremost place among the immortals of the nineteenth century, secured for him by his masterpiece, the "Christ Before Pilate." He has based his title to lasting fame on a religious subject, as did the old masters, and has well chosen for his most important life-work one of the most dramatic scenes in that "Divine Tragedy" which, though "eighteen centuries have rolled between," and despite advancing waves of doubt, still to a wonderful degree retains its power and influence over the minds and hearts of men. It is absolutely essential to the success of a great work of art that its subject should be one of universal importance and interest. The whole civilized world knows the Story of Christ, and hence this portrayal of one of the closing scenes in the life of the Redeemer interests not alone the followers of any one creed, but humanity at large. It is a work which, like the Madonnas of the old masters, may be viewed and studied alike, and side by side, by the sceptic, the Christian, the Hebrew and the Turk. * * *

The work is a grandly conceived one; is majestic in its simplicity and tells its dramatic story through no tricks of art, but simply by genius guiding the hand which created it. It satisfies and it moves the spectator. "Behold and look if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow," are the words that come irresistibly to his mind. The Christ of Munkacsy is both an ideal and a real conception. He has painted him as a noble, resolute man. His eye speaks defiance to Pilate; but it is the defiance of conscious truth. In this painting of the figure of Christ is the wonderful power of the

picture shown. Wander the glance where it will it always returns to its starting-point—the figure of the Redeemer. The artistic merit of the work rests in its admirable composition, its superb drawing and action, its wonderful studies of character, its rich, delicious and perfectly carried out color scheme, and in its chiaro-oscuro effects. A word as to these excellencies in succession. The plan of the composition is seen at once. The grouping, light, everything has been arranged to make Christ the central figure. Pilate comes next in importance, and then the ruffian shouting "Crucify Him!" These three figures are in white and in high light. The light falls from the right and is concentrated on Christ. There are also three principal groups in the foreground, in which are repeated the colors of white, blue and red. The first is formed by the soldier, the ruffian and the curious spectator; the second by Pilate and the two priests in right foreground, and the third by Christ, the Pharisee and Caiaphas. The effect of the composition is also heightened by the contrast of repose and action shown in the figures of Christ, Caiaphas and the ruffian. The brilliant coloring and light of the foreground is repeated in the sombre middle distance by high lights on the turban of the pointing spectator, on the face of the mother and child, and in the landscape in the background. Munkacsy has employed in this painting much more varied and lighter color than is his wont. As has been well said, "He has passed in it from Goya to Tintoretto." While the color key of the painting as a whole is a low one, as befits its sombre and tragic story, the coloring of the robes of the foreground figures is in itself a study, and is marvelously rich and true. The bit of sky introduced into the background has been warmly praised for its exquisite color. This praise may be deserved, but the color is an unnatural one, and resembles the conventional skies of the early Italian painters. The drawing of the figure is one of the most masterly features of the work. Hypercriticism must bow its head here. Christ in repose, Pilate seated, meditating; Caiaphas exhorting, the soldier pressing back the mob, the ruffian shouting, the Pharisee gazing, and the mother looking with pity—all are drawn with absolute correctness and anatomical knowledge. And lastly, let us look at the picture as a study of character. The artist had to choose his models, not among the Hebrews of Jerusalem or Palestine, but among those of Northern and Central Europe. His faces have been criticised adversely from this fact, and it has especially been urged that they are too Teutonic in appearance. Be this as it may, the faces bear out the story of the picture, and the vulgar types in particular belong to the idle and vicious of all communities. They are truthful in an everyday sense. The countenance of the ruffian is wonderfully expressive, coarse, cruel and brutal; that of Pilate, cold and ambitious, contrasts with the serene and lofty gaze of Christ, while those of the Pharisee and the aged, white-haired and bearded priests are full of crafty malice and hatred.

Space does not permit at this time further notice of this remarkable painting, the strongest and most notable yet brought to these shores. The painting should be visited by everyone. It will attract widespread and deserved notice and attention, and America viewing it will add her tribute and meed of praise to the great artist whose genius has produced it. Munkacsy te salutamus!

JAMES B. TOWNSEND.

FROM THE NEW YORK HERALD, NOVEMBER 18TH, 1886.

* * * It is an impressive and a dramatic scene, and one which grows on the beholder. * * * The "Christ Before Pilate" is a work which * * * will be ranked as one of the most remarkable of the century.

FROM THE NEW YORK TRIBUNE, NOVEMBER 18TH, 1886.

The artist's Christ is particularly differentiated from the other figures by mastery of self. There is agitation, turmoil, perplexity, wrath on all sides, but the central figure remains calm; occupied, we might say, more with Pilate's mental conflict than with the results to himself.

FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES, NOVEMBER 18TH, 1886.

* * * It can be heartily admired and applauded for the powerful character of nearly every figure in it, and for its masterly composition.

FROM THE NEW YORK STAR, NOVEMBER 18TH, 1886.

The masterpiece of Munkacsy, "Christ Before Pilate," was on view yesterday afternoon for the first time in America. * * * There was only one note of comment, and that was pitched in a high key of admiration. The impression made by this painting, on which the fame of the Hungarian artist will always rest, was so profound that the utmost stillness prevailed in the Tabernacle all afternoon. People seemed to hold their breath as they gazed. Perhaps the sacred character of the picture had something to do with this, but it could hardly account entirely for the rapt attention of the spectators.

FROM THE NEW YORK EVENING POST, NOVEMBER 25TH, 1886.

* * * "Christ Before Pilate" is a picture which demands the most serious consideration. To paint such a subject, on such a scale, is to attempt a work of surpassing importance. It is invading the field of the greatest painters our civilization has ever seen. Tintoretto, Paul Veronese, Raphael, Titian, have painted such subjects, and their marvelous creations still exist. * * * Its merits are great enough to insure it appreciation, and, judged on its merits, it will meet with the consideration it deserves.

FROM THE COURRIER DES ETATS-UNIS, NOVEMBER 20TH, 1886.

* * * Well lighted, the large canvas of the Hungarian master presents a splendid effect. This work, which shows long and conscientious study, is of such powerful conception and strength of technique that one cannot admire it too much. The *mise en scene* is superb, and proves that the painter has not recoiled before any study, before any difficulty. The attitudes of the people, the movements, simple and energetic, leave nothing to be desired further; each group by itself forms a picture within a picture, and one here remarks the marvelous details of the work. The color, dark and warm, pervading all, makes this canvas one of the most original and most powerful productions of our times. M. de Munkacsy has painted here a picture which can only be compared with the greatest works of the old masters.

FROM THE HOUR, NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 20TH, 1886.

* * * The picture is a great one, there can be no doubt about that, and Munkacsy, despite his triumphs in the old world, must have a heart of stone if it does not

beat responsive to the welcome he has had there. * * * In artlessness of composition, in study of character, in the effects wrought by attitudes and facial expression, in subtle contrasts, in indirect insinuations of meaning, in episodes here and there, which tersely assist the significance of the whole, in contrast of color, in disposition of light and shade, we have one of those very few great pictures which deserve to live through the centuries quite as much as do many by the grand "old masters," who, centuries ago, passed away. * * * Munkacsy's "Christ Before Pilate" is as real as one of Zola's novels; as spiritual, so far as the central figure is concerned, as the Lord's Prayer; as idealized, where idealization is needed, as Rosetti's poems; and for the rest, as illustrative of angry passions and mean motives as an average selection of fanatics and hypocrites can be. It is with special rejoicing that we observe that Christ is not one of those haloed hybridities which burlesque the Redeemer in some illustrated devotional books. He is a man; and, if Munkacsy wished to illustrate the sympathetic saintliness of his character, he could not have done it better than in that sad, yet serene countenance, illuminated by compassionate, yet majestic eyes, fixed upon Pilate with compassion, as though he greatly pitied the abject time-server in his cowardly evasion of the truth whereof he asked the meaning. The unity of the picture is conserved by the varying degrees of curiosity and sentiment of interest with which the eyes of almost every one are riveted upon Christ. * * * "Christ Before Pilate" is one of the noblest pictures that has ever visited this country. The interest it excites is perfectly legitimate. It deserves the house to itself which it now has. It is an elaborate creation in which genius, experience and patience were the workers.

FROM THE MAIL AND EXPRESS, NOVEMBER 20TH, 1886.

The most phenomenal career in the art of recent times is that of Michael Munkacsy, who in the space of but ten years leaped from indigence and obscurity into opulence and fame; and whose genius, in the painter's thirty-seventh year, culminated in the production of the *chef-d'œuvre* of the century. Great artists exist among his contemporaries—men of technique and color—but not one among them exemplifies to the same extent, or gives an equal sense of reality to the idea—rather felt than comprehended by those who entertain it—of inspiration. The mysterious impulse and creative intuition which the world vaguely summarizes in that word, applied to prophets and bards—the afflatus, that the ancients called divine, has found its unique manifestation in our day, in the work of a man whose youth was spent in manual labor of the humblest kind, and whose only education was gained in the hard school of experience.

The painting of "Christ Before Pilate," now on view at the Twenty-third Street Tabernacle, has had already an adventurous record, paralleled only by that of its author. Since the day when—by a literal but ungenerous reading of the laws which govern the Salon exhibition—it was forced to begin its wanderings in the Rue Rochefoucauld, it has made the tour of Europe, and has moved, literally, millions by its grand pathos and sublimity. It has been both a song and a sermon; such a song as the Prophet-King sang, and such a sermon as the Apostles preached. * * * That the acclamations which have followed it everywhere will find an echo here I have no doubt; that it will be criticised and misunderstood is also as certain as that there are variations in the points of view which the human mind takes; but that it will instil its great moral lesson and give a fresh impulse to our art culture is a foregone conclusion. * * * The first impression made is one of awe and surprise, which rapidly yields to another by which the beholder becomes an actor in, as well as a unit of, the audience of the lamentable drama. He feels himself transported into the midst of the event depicted, and becomes

an assistant in its tumultuous denouement. * * * In contrast with the excitement and uproar of the mob, stands motionless the slender figure of the accused, robed in white, with thongs about his wrists, majestic and sorrowful, undefiant, yet unafraid; gazing into the judge's face, but seeing far beyond him; the most pathetic figure in the world's history and the most sublime.

The modern artist who essays to paint the face or figure of our Lord places before himself a task of infinite difficulty, without having the assistance which the old masters derived from the sympathy of their audiences and the inspiration of a religious environment; and this is especially the case in the present day, when on the one hand he encounters preconceived ideas, and on the other the prejudice of skepticism. In proportion to the susceptibility of the artist is the difference between a conception destined to be lighted by the altar candelabra and gazed at amid clouds of incense by devout and kneeling worshippers, and one exposed on the wall of an exhibition and offered to profane criticism; and the contrast of the *milieu* has the same influence upon the beholder. That these difficulties should deter the painter from the attempt, it would be as far from me to assert as it would be to relegate religion itself to the sanctuary; but keeping them in mind assists the critic to measure the success or the reverse of the painter's accomplishment. No type in art has become more conventional than the features of Christ; not that it is necessarily perfect, but because no one has been able to realise a better one. * * * Mindful of the abyss which lies between the Infinite and the Finite, and which only Jesus of Nazareth has ever bridged, that makes it impossible to represent mortals and immortals on the same canvas with any approach to relative justice, the artist accepted the event he desired to portray as an historical one, and its chief personage in his human character as he walked and taught and suffered among men. He has imagined him beautiful and has endowed him with every divine trait possible for human features to express—courage, love, faith and charity. The face is pale and haggard, the flowing hair and beard are matted and neglected; upon the brow rests no effulgence save its own purity, no aureole encircles it, but the eyes are full of celestial light. It is equally remote from the sensual beauty of a Greek god and the super-sensual mysticism dreamed of by solitary monks and hysterical hermits. That the features possess characteristics common to all enthusiasts, and which have distinguished most martyrs, and that their expression betrays mortal suffering and even mortal weakness, is not opposed to the inspired record of the night in Gethsemane, and but adds to our human interest and appeals to our human sympathy and love.

Upon the moral meaning of such a picture it is needless to insist. While each one is free to compare the conception with his own, and to judge for himself how far the artist has realised or fallen short of his sublime intention, no one, unless his judgment has suffered distortion from prejudice, can stand before this magnificent work and not feel that it is the fruit of profound religious meditation and of passionate sympathy with humanity.

Of the painting as painting, viewed from the standpoint of its handiwork, of the majestic treatment of values and color harmonies, of its plastic and picturesque handling and opulence of resource in technique, it will be necessary to write hereafter. These are, it is true, of no less, perhaps are of even more importance in a critical examination than the ensemble which is finally but their result; but even the critic may be pardoned if, for the moment, they appear insignificant in the eyes dim from the first contemplation and yet moist with the recollection of a scene of such irresistible pathos as that presented in the "Christ Before Pilate."

JOHN R. TAIT.

FROM THE NEW YORK EVANGELIST, MARCH 24, 1887.

(Contribution by the Rev. CHARLES S. ROBINSON, D. D.)

* * * Two or three days ago I was passing through Twenty-third Street, close by the Tabernacle. Such a press of people stood along the walk that one had to cross the road to get past. I made inquiry of the attendant, who stood beside the freer door of egress, what all this meant, and I received the reply that the entrance was often crowded in pretty much the same way. A hundred and fifty adults were strung along in an uneasy queue waiting their turn; the attendant told me I could get in, perhaps, in half an hour. This is now at the end of some weeks of exhibition, on the same spot, at the price of fifty cents a ticket. Such a record is unparalleled in this city, at all events. No painting has ever gained so enthusiastic a welcome, and held so steady a throng for so long a time. The papers have spoken of it; the preachers have sermonized with its scene as the interpretation of a chapter; the artists have pronounced it admirable; and the common people look upon it gladly.

To me this painting becomes a realization of the Scripture story in an astonishing way: I seem to see the Roman governor and the Jewish rabbi. That is one's first thought, and of course it is disappointing to many minds. Some people look for deity, something supernatural in the Redeemer's form; here He appears only human. But study is rewarded if one will only be patient. As to drawing and color and dramatic action, there can be but one verdict. Altogether I rejoice that a picture is here so full of suggestion and help to Christian grace.

Our tourist party in 1882 visited the show when this picture was in Conduit Street in London. I studied it faithfully, and became sure that it must be one of the grandest triumphs of art in the wide world. I bought photographs, secured a pamphlet, cut out slips from the newspapers, and came home to take up the study of John's history of Pilate for a series of Sabbath lectures for our people in the church. Health failed, and the plan was deferred. But I never forgot my purpose till suddenly the great canvas came into the city. Then everybody went into enthusiasms of admiration, and a score of ministers advertised sermons, and my chance was gone. I never expected to write a word on the subject until one day I read the article in *The Evangelist* by my gifted friend, Rev. Dr. Cowles, of Elmira, February 17, of this year. For I believe in him as an artist-teacher beyond most men. For a great term of useful service he has been studying and thinking. What he writes a common man can afford to read. There was so much of refined courtesy, so much of penetration to the central thought of the subject, that all at once came my wish back to me to say something about the matter as a personal communication. For, indeed, I cannot make myself think with my dear friend, that "it is to be hoped that this picture will not remain in this country." I am fairly out of breath when he says, "It is high time that Christian art should be rescued from the hands of the Philistines." I know that; but what is the pertinency of such a depreciation in this connection? Is it true that the Hungarian has given us here a face of Renan's Christ, "either by intention, or by his own unbelief"?

For I find among a voluminous mass of notes, which evidently during these years first and last have been gathered for my data, that a very different reputation attaches itself to Munkacsy from that of Renan. He is a Roman Catholic of moral life and devout tendencies. Men have told me authoritatively that he has stated that his ideal of Jesus' figure was that of the true God-man, the Immanuel as nearly as any human being could hope to realize it—the divine ideal of the New Testament. He may have failed; and Dr. Cowles is one of the clearest and kindest of critics; and what he thinks

of an artistic effort is always worth hearing ; but is he prepared to say that this painter has deliberately or ignorantly designed to embody Renan's conception of a "soft, goodish enthusiast, a most sincere but impracticable idealist, intoxicated with his own success, and self-deceived in his estimate of himself and his mission?" If he did, he has most egregiously failed.

For, if this be so, I cannot conceive what all the Christian intelligence of Europe and America has been about in thronging this picture so, and imagining they find "Jesus that is called the Christ." I cannot satisfy myself that it is owing to the successes of any "adroit manager," or the blandishments of "a personal visit" of the artist. I never saw Munkacsy, and I do not know who the manager is, and still my honest verdict is that this Christ, before this Pilate, is the nearest to perfection as a representation of the New Testament story, I ever in all my artistic explorations of the world's galleries have looked upon.

The truth is, nobody is ever argued out of what he was not argued into. Taste is not a thing of logic. I learned that long ago, when I was dealing with tunes and hymns. What a man likes, he likes ; if he dislikes a piece of poetry or a melody with a refrain, it is of no use to talk to him about it afterwards, he never gives in. We all fashion our ideals of the Lord Jesus Christ : no artist can possibly produce to us our own conception ; every painting is a keen disappointment the moment we set our eyes upon it. Here yesterday I stopped at the office of an intelligent physician, a devout Christian, and invited him to go with me for company down to the Tabernacle to see the picture. He instantly declined ; then added courteously that he had been in there all alone once for two minutes, got disgusted and left : "It was of no use for anybody to try to paint the Saviour." I persuaded him to come for another trial ; he went ; he sat there a half-hour in deepest meditation, leaning forward towards the canvas. By-and-by I aroused him, to leave. Out in the street he said softly : "It grows on one like Niagara."

The meaning of this inconsistency is found in the baffling check one receives at finding his own ideal unrealized ; after that he may be in a better mood to study the ideal of another, which possibly will be to him in the end a far truer one than his own. This picture is not my ideal ; I shall never see mine ; but I soberly declare it cannot even suggest Renan's to my imagination. I cannot find in it anything but a lofty conception of a suffering, dignified, dauntless Redeemer, without shadow of fear or self-distrust ; and over all this I see, or perhaps I only think I see, something which is far beyond manhood alone.

One step more : I do not know why my good friend President Cowles thought it necessary to attack the technique. He knows as well as any one how intensely painters abominate the help of photographs ; how they resent the implication that they have resorted to such accessories in works of pure imagination like this. What was the use of belittling a painting so ambitious by saying that Munkacsy probably took some swift "happy moment of successful arrangement" in the Passion Play, and then caught it for his scene by "instantaneous photography"? I do not call that fair. It is as if an artist had tried to paint Hamlet, and unamiable critics had suggested that he watched his opportunity to catch a photograph of Edwin Booth in a "happy moment" for his model, when perhaps the painter never had set eyes on that actor in his life.

I know that this artist never saw the Play at Ober-Ammergau ; indeed, he positively refused to witness it, that his ideal of the Christ might not be disturbed : some one who knew gave me that item. Moreover, there are in existence, so it has been published, five studies of this complete composition, made along the course of it. One of these, perhaps a yard wide, was advertised as on exhibition in London ; it is now owned by an English friend of the painter. Then there are several individual studies of the head of

Jesus, as if the man was trying, and again trying to realize his ideal, before he settled upon his choice as it now appears. I have a little list of eight studies more, known yet to be in existence; representations of different and particular heads, and groups of parts of the picture. These show that he did not steal, nor plagiarize by photography, any scene in the Passion Play. I never myself saw that exhibition at Ober-Ammergau; but I was within two days of it the last time it was performed. I thought it would be wicked to go to the theatre on Sunday; but I felt the drawing of the crowd which was going, and I paid foolish sums for photographs of the particulars. And among all my groups there is nothing that suggests this picture of "Christ Before Pilate," either in the "successful arrangement," or the individual faces. My belief is that this man Munkacsy could have told those peasants more than they ever imagined as to artistic tableaux.

I am sorry I cannot agree with Dr. Cowles in this instance. But I wish he would write more upon art subjects than he is wont. The ordinary criticisms lack his keen perception and his devout spirit, sometimes. Perhaps he will draw nearer to me in taste and decision, if so be that he should ever visit this great picture again. And so I am in just one degree more glad, as I reverse his dictum in the proclamation of my own, namely: it is a matter of sincere congratulation that such a picture as this is to remain in this country.

From *Beck's Journal of Decorative Art*, January, 1887.

Some professional newspaper critics in New York have freely criticised this work of Munkacsy's, apparently from two points of view: First, as to the methods employed in placing the picture before the public, which they compare to those used in the ordinary "show" of a prodigy. To us this kind of criticism is wholly irrelevant and out of place, and we confess to a feeling of compassion for the man or woman critic who could stand before such a work of art, with no other thought than those which related to the commercial details of its exhibition.

We think the best answer to this kind of criticism is that given by an intelligent person who happened to overhear a remark of this nature. He observed that if the picture was exhibited here at all, such arrangements were inevitable to meet the heavy expenses, and for his part he had but a feeling of gratitude that such a *chef-d'œuvre* had been brought to the United States, thus giving the opportunity to thousands to see the picture who otherwise would be debarred from doing so. He also said that, considering the large amount of instruction conveyed by the exhibition of such a noble work of art, he would gladly see the example followed in the case of other paintings of an exceptionally high order of merit.

The other kind of criticism relates, first, to the figure and especially the face of Christ, which they suggest has a too human aspect. Now, it is claimed by the most devout that Jesus had but two personal attributes, which were exercised separately although blended into one, in His person; that he was God and man. It is true that in mediæval times artists who were painting purely religious paintings to order, compromised the issue by representing Christ as man, but having a halo or supernatural ring of light over His head. Such a form of expressing the Godhead would have been ridiculous in Munkacsy's work, and he had clearly to choose between the realistic form of man or the idealistic form of a God. He chose the former—for where is the brush that could have painted the latter?

To those critics who have objected to this or that detail, or who would have liked some portion of the painting to have been treated fundamentally in a different manner, we would commend some remarks expressed recently at the Nineteenth Century Club,

having reference to, art criticism. As to the claims of the rival schools of realistic and imaginative art it was pointed out that the world was big enough, and human genius varied enough, for both forms of art to flourish side by side, not only without detriment but with advantage. It must certainly be a very narrow capacity that can appreciate always one line only, and a very narrow judgment that would prescribe boundaries to the exercise of genius. One artist may delight us by the vigor and fidelity of his realistic picture, while another may charm us by the ideal beauty of what may be a reverse, and with equal power there may be equal interest in both methods of expression. Feebleness and affectation are the chief things to draw down censure.

Those who have visited Munkacsy's noble picture with a prejudice or unfavorable foregone conclusion, have done both injustice to the artist and to themselves. The sole attitude of a person before any work of art should be receptivity. Surely let the picture impress us if it can; let it take possession of us, and above all things, let the artist have his say and not ours. He has the right to choose his own subject, treat it in his own way, express his ideas as he feels them; he must be wholly himself and no one else, and it is the sole business of the observer to surrender himself to the message of the originator. If the art critic would accept this view as his guide, and be imbued with such a spirit in penning his criticism, he would avoid misleading his readers and add a dignity to his calling.

J. M.

CORRESPONDENCE, PHILADELPHIA NORTH AMERICAN, MARCH 2, 1887.

* * * The first glimpse startles you with its wonderful approach to real life; the figures stand out so boldly from the canvas and the faces are so instinct with emotion that you feel as if you had really entered the Judgment Hall of Pilate, and were an actual spectator of the more than tragic event which the artist has delineated. In the centre, robed in white, with hands crossed and cord-bound, stands Jesus, the "Man of Sorrows," his face betokening the deepest anguish, yet wearing the most passive submission and the most perfect humility. The form and features are purely human, as they should be, but there seems an almost divine pathos in that weary, pitying eye. In a recess on the right hand of the picture, upon an elevation reached by four marvelously-executed steps, sits the Roman Judge, clothed in a white *toga* with a border of red. His hair is cut short, revealing a round, shapely head; his dark eyes, with a bewildered expression, are bent towards the friendless prisoner, and yet they seem to be perpetually glancing at the fingers of his left hand, which he is nervously twitching, as if they could help him to form a decision upon the strange case presented for his disposal.

To his right stands, erect and defiant, Caiaphas, the High Priest, haughty, imperious, vindictive, urging the vacillating Governor to condemn Christ to death. Near and around the seat of judgment are gathered priests and scribes, who are discussing the career and probable fate of the strange captive—their eager countenances betraying bitter hatred, while in the rear, held back by the firmly-clasped spear of a Roman soldier, the excited crowd are rudely pressing in, and you can almost hear their blood-thirsty cry, "Crucify him!" "Crucify him!"

One face alone has pity and compassion traced upon it. It is that of a young mother—"a daughter of Jerusalem"—with a child in her arms, leaning against the wall, and evidently deeply moved by the strangely sad picture before her. She seems trying to find out what imparts such strength and sweetness to the lamb-like sufferer. One other calm spot in the picture is the outlook under the square beams of the ancient building. It is early morning, and the scene is very beautiful, a heavenly blue relieving the dreadful darkness of the hall itself.

